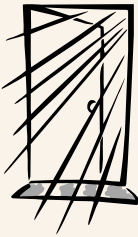


LET'S Talk

WINTER 2004

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

Open the Door to a Happier 2004



Do you like to daydream? Just imagine ...

- You're not as stressed as you used to be.
- You've adopted some truly effective parenting tips.
- Relationship problems no longer are getting the best of you.
- You've learned how to control your anger.
- You're more contented at home.
- You're getting along better with your co-workers.

Your EAP can help you open the door to making your daydreams become realities in 2004. Contact Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential assistance.

And have a Happy New Year!

Making and Maintaining Healthy Changes

HALF OF US MAKE THEM EVERY YEAR:

New Year's resolutions. Many people use New Year's resolutions to rid themselves of unhealthy habits, such as smoking or eating junk food.

One study of more than 200 people who made New Year's resolutions showed that 75 percent were sticking with them a week later. But only 40 percent were still on track after six months. The researchers found that people who kept their resolutions over time had three things in common.

- They believed that they could change.
- They weren't too hard on themselves if they didn't make a total change right away.
- They didn't expect their life to change dramatically after meeting their goal.

The Road to Successful Change

Change doesn't happen overnight. Just because it's January 1 doesn't mean you're ready to make a change. Knowing your readiness to change can help you choose your next step. People usually go through these phases on their way to change:

- 1.** "I'm thinking about it." Your desire for change is still vague. Gather information on the benefits of the change you're considering.
- 2.** "I'm ready." You are starting to test your ability to make long-term change by making small improvements. This is the best time to make a resolution to change.



Ask your friends and family for their support.

- 3.** "I'll do it." You put your plan into motion and take action. Be sure to monitor your progress from time to time.
- 4.** "I did it." Reward yourself for staying on track. And replace the time you once spent on an unhealthy habit with something equally enjoyable. For example, if you used to smoke a cigarette after meals, spend that time taking a quick walk or talking with a friend instead.

Dream the Possible Dream

To stick with a healthy resolution, start small. Begin with an achievable resolution, something you can reasonably accomplish. Your confidence will increase by making a simple resolution rather than a grand plan that doesn't get off the ground. And most important, believe in yourself. Reading or saying a simple affirmation to yourself every day, such as "I am going to do it," will remind you that you have the power to change.

what's new

Late-Breaking Health News

>>Bottling up your anger can cause headaches, according to a study published in the journal *Headache*. Researchers found that holding in anger was the biggest predictor of headaches among a group of 422 adults in the study.

Researchers looked at how angry a person is, how much he or she internalizes anger, and how severe and frequent headaches are. They also considered whether the individual was anxious or depressed, two factors that have been linked to headaches.

This doesn't mean you should express your anger. Researchers suggest people learn ways to be more patient so they avoid becoming angry.

>>Government health studies on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) over the past 18 months delivered the following findings:

JULY 2002: The government-backed *Women's Health Initiative* study of 16,608 women is halted because researchers discovered significant health risks for women taking estrogen-progestin pills. The risk for heart disease was 29 percent higher than expected. Breast cancer risk increased by 26 percent.

MARCH 2003: HRT failed to improve older women's memory, sleeping or mental outlook.

MAY 2003: Those who took estrogen-progestin an average of more than four years faced double the risk for Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

JUNE 2003: Breast cancer linked to estrogen-progestin may be hard to detect.

AUGUST 2003: The risk for heart attacks during the first year on the pills was nearly double the expected rate. Risk was also higher than expected for those with high LDL cholesterol.



>>A DIET RICH IN FRUIT, VEGETABLES, FISH, BEANS, LOW-FAT DAIRY AND WHOLE GRAINS is the foundation of a long life, according to a new study of 59,038 women published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*.

Regular consumption of a large variety of healthful foods — including apples, pears, oranges, bananas, cucumbers, tomatoes, spinach, kale, cabbage, carrots, beets, beans, peas, low-fat milk and yogurt, whole-grain breads, oats, salmon, herring, tuna and other fish — was associated with longevity and lower mortality rates from heart disease and cancer.


In contrast, a diet that includes lots of less healthful foods — such as red meat, bacon, sausages, cold cuts, French fries, chips, cheese, margarine, white bread, cookies, ice cream, candy, sugary foods and foods rich in saturated fats — was associated with increased mortality rates from cancer.

Foods in the healthful group are low in fat and rich in vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, fiber and essential fatty acids.

See your physician for guidance and advice regarding a specific health condition.

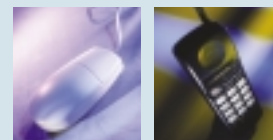
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Making the Most of a Difficult Transition

You just got the news: Your department is reorganizing, downsizing or being combined with another department — or you're getting a new boss. What can you do to weather the change?

"When it freezes over, ice skate," says Patt Schwab, Ph.D., a professional speaker in Seattle who specializes in workplace change.

During a difficult transition, you may not be able to concentrate on your work, may feel immobilized by stress and may be frightened about the future.

But don't despair. Schwab offers the following suggestions to help you float through difficult transitions instead of thrashing around in a sea of confusion.

Analyze

"Analyze what you can or can't do," says Schwab. "If you can't stop the change, then figure out what the next step is and live with it. Don't waste time fighting a done deal."

If you're being laid off, analyze your skills, assess your contacts and determine how much time you have between now and your last paycheck.

Look for opportunities that may arise out of the change. If your unit is being absorbed by another department, do some research to learn as much as you can about the other group.

Say Farewell

"There's a whole progression of natural feelings you go through during a transition," explains Schwab.

"First you deny something is going to happen, then you resist it, then you explore different scenarios, and finally you accept it and commit to the new change."

Saying good-bye to the past is important to moving forward. You must let go of one side of the pool before you can swim to the other side.

Be Prepared

You'll fare best if you live your life like the Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared.

Look for opportunities that may arise out of the change.



"This means you've kept your training up to date, you haven't over-extended yourself financially and your relationships are good both in and out of the workplace," say Schwab.

Even if your department isn't at a turning point, preparing yourself for any possibility will help you ease through difficult transitions when they do happen, and will help you approach each day with confidence.



Hear Today, Hear Tomorrow

From morning's first echo of percolating coffee to evening's final chat with friends, our hearing connects us to our surroundings. By our late 40s, however, many of us join 30 million other Americans in asking, "Could you speak up?"

"People are complaining at increasingly younger ages of hearing loss," says Margaret Wallhagen, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor in the Department of Physiological Nursing at the University of California in San Francisco.

Luckily, however, we can often prevent hearing loss.

Two types of problems can interfere with hearing:

- Conductive hearing loss can occur at any age from injury, illness or trauma to the middle or outer ear.
- Sensorineural hearing loss, more common, stems from damage to the inner ear. Sometimes it results from illness or sudden loud noise. Most often, it results from long-term exposure to loud noises.

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is the top cause of middle-age hearing impairment. In the inner ear, 24,000 sensory hair cells that transfer sound to nerves suffer repeated tiny injuries and don't regenerate. The ear can't translate sounds, especially high-pitched tones.

The simplest way to protect your hearing is to avoid loud noises. If that's impossible, use earplugs or other products to block the noise.

Some other advice:

- See a doctor if you have ringing in your ears.
- Spend 20 minutes in silence: Ears suffer fatigue.
- If work or recreation involves loud noises, get a hearing test annually.

Remember, if the noise level is too loud to comfortably carry on a conversation, it's loud enough to pose a risk to your hearing.

Do You Have a Healthy Attitude?

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, FAITH AND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS can make you healthier, experts agree.

No one's sure exactly how some of these factors contribute to good health, but study after study shows they do. A positive attitude depends on genetic influences, upbringing, health habits, social connections and emotional support. You can't change some of these factors, but you can learn new ways of thinking and behavior to help maintain a positive mind-set — and live a healthier life.

"Your beliefs about a particular situation are very important in terms of your immune system's response to stress. The more optimistic you are, the higher the level and function of key immune cells in your body," says psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, Ph.D. "While a stronger immune system doesn't necessarily mean you feel better, it does affect how easily you get sick, or how well you recover from illness or surgery."

So does having a good connection to family, friends and acquaintances. In general, social ties guard against stress and contribute to a positive attitude. Researchers have proven that they also help you survive major illnesses and heal more quickly.

"A strong social support system encourages better health habits," says psychiatrist Redford B. Williams, M.D., director of



behavioral research at Duke University Medical Center. Company can also ward off depression.

Experts warn, however, that some people feel more comfortable being alone. If forging ties to family and friends actually stresses you out, you're better off respecting your need for solitude, suggests Dr. Segerstrom.

"As you practice healthy habits, you affect your health positively," says Dr. Gordon. "You soon feel the results of your efforts. That reinforces not only a positive attitude, but also the control you now have over your life — to make it the best it can be."

FOH **FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**
a component of the US Public Health Service
Program Support Center
Department of Health and Human Services

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Put some positive energy in your life by identifying activities that make you feel good, then doing more of them every day. Asking these questions will help you identify such activities: What always makes me smile? What fills my heart with love? What makes me feel fulfilled? What small things leave me feeling content?

Family Circle, 110 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011.

It takes more than saying "no" to keep teens off drugs. Preventing drug abuse requires parents to frequently discuss the health and safety issues involved in drug use. Experts stress the importance of listening to your teens during such talks and not lecturing. Setting standards for behavior and consequences for not meeting those standards also is important.

University of Washington Health Sciences and Medical Affairs, Seattle.

You're at risk for an eating disorder if you: Obsessively keep track of everything you eat; weigh yourself more than once a day; eat in secret; give more priority to your workouts than your social life.

Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Writing in a journal after you suffer something traumatic can help you heal — if you write not only about how you're feeling, but also how you're dealing with the setback. It's not enough to say you're angry; also detail what you're doing to calm yourself.

Research at the University of Iowa, Iowa City.

Avoid distractions at work. Jumping from one thing to the next indicates an undisciplined commitment to priorities.

12 Simple Secrets of Happiness at Work by Glenn Van Ekeren.